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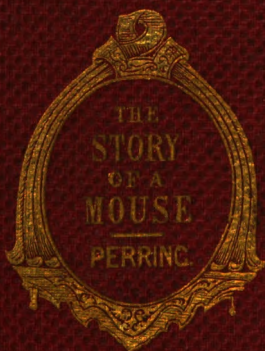
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**THE**  
**STORY OF A MOUSE.**







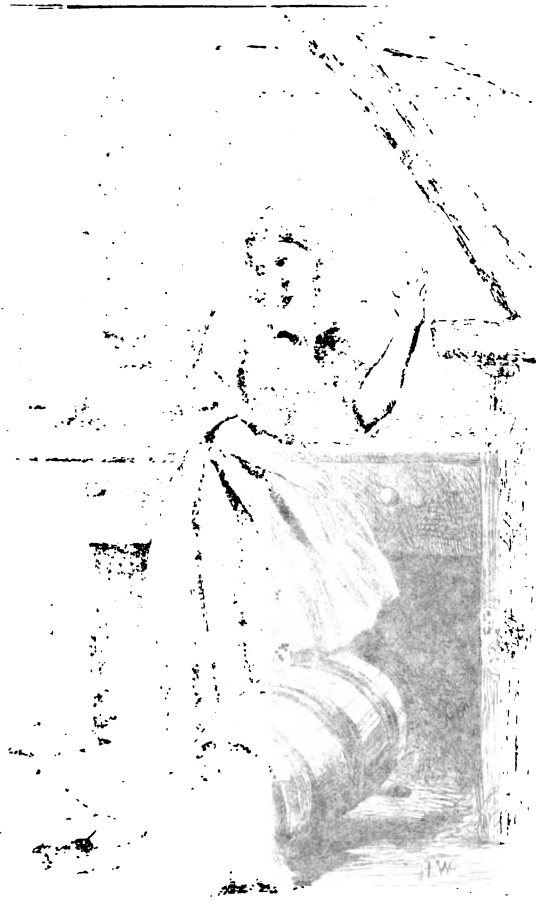


Susan exclaimed, "O, grandfather, there's a mouse!" and instantly let the tub fall on the floor.—P. 96.

# THE STORY OF A MOUSE.



LONDON  
G. ROUTLEDGE & CO.



she has a mouse — not only for the  
the day — 1890.

# THE STORY OF A MOUSE.



LONDON  
G. ROUTLEDGE & CO.



THE  
STORY OF A MOUSE.

FOR THE  
AMUSEMENT AND BENEFIT OF LITTLE PEOPLE.

BY  
MRS. PERRING.

The *Bee*, the *Ant*, can teach, why not the *Mouse*,  
Who plays his merry pranks about thine house ?”

LONDON :  
G. ROUTLEDGE & CO. FARRINGTON STREET ;  
NEW YORK : 18, BEEKMAN STREET.

1858.



## PREFACE.



MY DEAR LITTLE READERS,

WHEN you have read this "Story of a Mouse," don't put the book aside as if, the amusement being over, you had nothing more to do with it, but might forget it as an idle tale. Amusement *alone* is not what the book was written for. I want you to remember its contents, and to consider, as you have life to commence, with all its pleasures and its troubles, its joys and its sorrows, whether it would not be well to begin it in the



spirit of unselfish love. "Little children, love one another," says the Apostle St. John; and the blessed Saviour, when he tells his disciples to "become as little children," means, of course, loving, dutiful children.

My Mouse I believe to be a faithful little fellow; he wishes to tell you the truth. While he does not conceal his own faults, he is most anxious to teach you the way to be happy. From what he has seen and heard, he knows well enough that selfish, greedy, disobedient children *cannot* be happy; and he shows you plainly that little boys and girls who try to please their parents and friends, whether they are rich or poor, have pleasures which the selfish child never can have. Yes; and they are *real*

pleasures; they do not pass away like the short-lived gratification which the possession of a new top, or ball, or kite, or doll, or any other plaything, can give. No, no; the remembrance of a kindness done to your playmates, your school-fellows, but especially to the poor, will be a lasting comfort to you; it will be a pleasure that will never leave you. So, also, it will be with every act of quiet obedience to the commands of your parents, though they may be contrary to your own wishes. God has so ordered it, dear children, that the pleasure of having your own way should not be at all equal to what you would find in giving up your will to please others. Now try this plan, will you? Take the advice of my little Mouse! Think over all he has

told you. If you try, and find yourselves disappointed, you know there will be no harm done,—you can even return to your old ways; but this I hope you will not be inclined to do, and I will not believe you would.

And now, dear Readers, here is my little book. If it pleases you, I hope soon to address you again. I am a sincere lover of good children; I don't want to see them made men and women of before their time; but I earnestly desire that when their time does come they may be really good men and women.

FAREWELL!

# THE STORY OF A MOUSE.

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## CHAPTER I.

FOUR little trembling, shaking things we were, I remember, with soft, silky coats, and bright black eyes, and long tails; and very fond and proud our mother was of us, and a great many cautions and warnings she gave us, to prevent us from running into mischief, which, I am sorry to say, we were very apt to do; though I never heard our mother say that it was wrong to take a bit of sugar, or cheese, or sweetmeats, so of course we thought no harm of doing so whenever we had an opportunity. This led me, however, into many

scrapes, and much danger, as I shall show you as I proceed.

Our home was a nice, snug little place, very cosy and warm, just behind the skirting-board, and near the fireplace of a large parlour, in which sometimes there was a great deal of noise and confusion, and not a little crying. We mice often wondered how this could be, seeing there was everything that could be wanted to make people happy. We peeped through the chinks, and saw a comfortable room, a large table in the middle with meat, and pudding, and vegetables; and the smell was so nice that it was with difficulty our mother kept us from running out to try and get a taste of some of the dainties. However there were plenty of customers for them without us.

There were Mr. and Mrs. Morley, and Master Morley, the eldest, and Miss Morley the next, and Agnes, and little

Fanny. They were all nice-looking children but not well-behaved.

Master Morley, instead of quietly taking what his mamma chose to give him, would ask for what *he* thought was the nicest part, and then Miss Morley would say, "And *I* like that, too, mamma;" and Mrs. Morley didn't check them at all, but just gave them what they asked for; so the children showed their selfishness, and were encouraged in it. Then Miss Morley had a very disagreeable way of lounging with her arms on the table, and staring about at everybody, instead of eating her own dinner; so she was always the last to have done, and sometimes her plate was sent away before she had finished.

Agnes and little Fanny would have been nice children if they had not been spoiled; but the former had been too much noticed, and had learned so many

little affected ways, that sensible people soon ceased to admire her ; and little Fanny was so determined to have all her own way that you may be sure there was plenty of squalling when she was thwarted.

Besides these bad habits, the children sometimes all talked at once, and interrupted their papa and mamma in whatever they were saying, and the elder ones would give their opinion when no one asked them for it. In short, they made themselves very disagreeable, and we mice were heartily glad when they all left the room and went to play in the nursery ; but I'm sure if you had heard the noise *there* sometimes, you would have thought the ceiling was coming through. Our mother often said that she was very sorry for Mr. and Mrs. Morley, for they were good, kind-hearted people, but so indulgent to their children, that they were

bringing them up to be a trouble instead of a comfort to them.

One very bad fault these children had, which, though I am only a little mouse, I would advise others to avoid, because it creates a great deal of mischief and trouble—they were always telling tales, either of the servants or of one another: the consequence was, that the servants did not like them, and there was constant disputing between the children themselves. It may seem very strange to you, dear reader, that their mamma allowed them to tell tales, but I have told you before that Mrs. Morley was too indulgent, and she either did not see the faults of her children, or could not find in her heart to correct them. However, in this case it would not have cost her much trouble, for if she had refused to listen, there could have been no telling. But in speaking of the faults of others, let me not try to



conceal my own. I am obliged to confess, then, that I was both greedy and disobedient, and many a scrape have I got into by these two *great faults*.

It was not very long after the day I have been speaking of, when the same savoury food and delicious smell caught my attention, and I determined, after the family had dined, that, in spite of all warnings, I would venture out of our hiding-place, and try to pick up a few crumbs at least of the feast. Accordingly, when all seemed quiet, unknown to my mother, who was taking her afternoon nap, I crept through a small hole, and found, to my great satisfaction, that a plentiful supply of potato and pudding remained under the table. Depend upon it, kind reader, I did not find any fault in my own mind with the children who had scattered the crumbs, nor with the servant who had neglected to sweep them up; I contented myself with stuffing,

and with thinking how foolish it was of our mother to be so frightened about us, and how much pleasure she deprived us of by her alarm for our safety. In the very midst of my enjoyment, however, I happened to turn round rather suddenly, when, to my horror, I beheld the cat, whom I had ever been in great dread of, just in the act of springing upon me. I darted like lightning across the room, hiding myself behind a large box that stood against the wall, the cat, of course, after me, scratching and tearing at the box, while I lay shivering and trembling like a guilty thing as I was, and thinking that I should never see the dear little home, and my mother and brothers again. Happily for me, however, Mrs. Puss was disappointed of her meal this time, for the servant came into the room to put some glasses on the sideboard, and she turned the cat out, and shut the door

when she had done. You may think I was not long in making my way home, and so great was my joy at finding myself once more in a place of safety, that though I expected and deserved to be scolded, I told our mother all that had happened.

She said calmly,—“I need not punish you this time, because you have suffered severely ; let it be a lesson to you for the future, and believe that your friends know better what is good for you than you do yourself.”

I really was very sorry and ashamed, and for a long time after this I was quiet and obedient, but it happened one day, as I was scrambling up and down, amusing myself in the best way I could, I found out a small chink that led, as I thought, into the yard. Now I had often heard strange sounds come from this quarter that I could not at all make out, and I felt a strong curiosity to know what

made them; I was sure that neither men, women, nor children had such a rough grunting voice; so I just thought, I would try to learn what it was. Backwards and forwards I ran, then, until I found a little crevice, through which I had the greatest difficulty in squeezing, and oh! the fright I got when I found myself close beside such a monster as I can scarcely describe to you. It was of an enormous size, and it went snuffing all about, as if it were on the search for poor me, and would swallow me up at one gulp in an instant.

Oh! such an immense mouth it had, and two long ears flapping about, and a noise came from its throat just the same as I had often heard before, only now I was near it sounded ten times louder, and more dreadful, so that it made me quake again.

What could I do? Not get back into

the house, that was impossible ; so I ran for safety behind the pump-trough. Alas ! here again was trouble ; for in a few minutes Master Morley came to sail a small boat in it, and I was discovered instantly, and the cry set up, " A mouse ! a mouse ! " and poor I was driven from my hiding-place, and pursued all round the yard with sticks and stones, which were thrown at me without mercy ; but, after all, I escaped unhurt under the back yard door. And now I found myself fairly in a new world, but what befell me there I must tell you children in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER II.

Now, then, I had a new life to begin, and all alone. I had lost my first home, my dear mother, and my little brothers, for ever; and without a home or a friend I had to wander forth.

Oh! how my heart ached to think of those I had left behind. Little time, however, was there just then for thinking, for I was in a lane where there were a number of noisy children, who, if they spied me, I knew would not spare me. Besides, I saw behind a large water-barrel my old enemy the cat skulking, and I do believe she was looking out for me. You may be sure I was not long in getting under shelter; I made my way to a large barn on the opposite side of the road, and though puss actually made a

desperate spring after me, I escaped her claws, and crept safely into the barn.

Here, tired, frightened, and hungry, I crept down in a corner to rest myself and to think what was best to be done; but I very soon fell into a sound sleep, and dreamed that I was once more at home with my dear mother, and that she was so delighted to see me, and my little brothers came round me so curious to know what had happened to me since I had left them. Ah! but it was only a dream. I am sure, dear little reader, you would have been quite sorry for me if you could have known what I felt on awaking, and finding myself alone in that large barn. However, I knew very well that giving way to grief would do no good, and being now *very* hungry, I began to look round for something to eat; and truly, if that had been all I wanted, there was abundance of grain to satisfy hunger,—I might have

feasted for a year on that ; but I had been accustomed to more variety when I was at Mrs. Morley's ; besides, I 'did not like being alone ; so, after a few days' rest, or rather a few days' gambol, in the barn, I scrambled up the side of the door and soon found a hole large enough for a mouse to creep through. Down I came, plump upon the ground, but I fell on my feet, and was not at all hurt ; so I set off in search of a new home and new adventures.

I was not long in making my way to a pretty-looking cottage. The door stood open, and round it was a trellis-work with roses and other creepers growing up it. There was a nice garden in the front of the house, where there were beds of flowers, and, just behind them, plenty of vegetables. A sweet-tempered looking little girl, with merry blue eyes, and rosy cheeks, and curly hair, was gathering some roses and



other pretty flowers, and arranging them nicely in her hand, while her brother, who seemed to be rather older than she, was pulling peas for dinner.

"Won't papa be pleased when he comes home from his hot walk to see these beautiful roses, Edward?" said the little girl.

"Yes, that he will," said Edward; "he is so fond of flowers, and you put them together so nicely, Emmy. I never saw any one make a nosegay so well as you do."

"Oh! I am so glad you like it, Edward; if it had not been for your care, I should not have had such beautiful flowers to arrange."

"You deserve anything I can do for you," said the affectionate boy; "but just look, Emily, what a basketful of peas I have pulled. Won't they be nice with the bacon?"

“Edward,” said the little girl, “as you have got so many, don’t you think we might save a few at dinner-time for poor old Sally? Papa told us she was so lame with rheumatism that she could not get to church now; so, you know, she can’t come to our house, as she used to do, for any little thing mamma had to give her. Shall we ask to go, Edward, with a plate of peas and a small slice of bacon?”

“With all my heart, Emmy; but I expect we shall have but a *small* slice of bacon. I don’t like to ask papa for anything to give away, for I know he has so little to keep us all with, that I often wonder how mamma manages to make it serve.”

“But,” said the kind girl, “you know, Edward dear, we need not say a word about the bacon; we can just save half of ours: a small piece will be enough for the poor old body. As you say, it is a

wonder how mamma manages to keep us all so comfortable with so little means."

"Well, you know, Emily, mamma makes all our clothes, and teaches us, and helps the little girl to cook, and makes the beds; indeed, I think mamma can do anything."

"So she can," said Emily, eagerly. "Oh! how I wish I could help her more than I do!"

"You do help mamma a great deal, dear," said Edward; "for you can sew very neatly, and mend the stockings, and mind baby, and teach the little ones to say their letters, and to repeat hymns; and you can lay the cloth for dinner, and sweep up the fireside, and make the room all comfortable for papa when he comes home; and I have heard mamma say often, 'I am sure I don't know *what* I should do without Emily.'"

"Oh, Edward! you almost make me

cry to hear you talk in that way; indeed, I do love mamma and papa so dearly, and the dear little ones, and you, dear Edward, I would do anything for you all;" and the sweet, kind-hearted child threw her arms round her brother's neck, and I saw some bright tears in their eyes; and then I thought to myself, "Well, *all* children are not selfish and unruly." I longed to see the parents of this good brother and sister.

So away I ran along by the hedge of the garden, and slipping through the passage without being seen, I crept into my old hiding-place behind the skirting board, where I could see all that went on.

Very soon a tidy little girl came in to lay the cloth, but Miss Emily was there before her, and having put her beautiful nosegay into a glass jar, she said, "I'll lay the cloth for you, Mary;" and the girl said, "Thank you Miss," and went out.

By and by I heard a man's step in the passage, and some little voices called out "Papa, papa," and a smaller one echoed "Pa, pa tum home to baby;" and Mr. Percival, who was the clergyman of the village, made his appearance in the dining-room, with two children clinging to his knees, and miss baby mounted on his shoulder.

"O papa, how hot you do seem!" said Emily, "do let me take baby from you."

This advice, however, baby did not at all approve of; for she clung round her papa's neck, and then looking into his face with a winning smile, she said, "Me ov oo, pa," and there was no resisting such an appeal.

"Where is your mamma, Emily?" said Mr. Percival.

"Here I am, dear Henry;" and Mrs. Percival made her appearance. Such a nice, neat, gentle, yet lively-looking woman I had never before seen.

"Darlings, you must not press so round

your papa; see how hot he is, and how tired he looks. Come, dear Edith, come to mamma;" and the little round plump arms were soon extended for the exchange, while the other young ones, attracted by the savoury smell of bacon and peas, relinquished their hold on papa and quietly put their chairs to the table. I noticed, however, that they did not attempt to sit down till they were told to do so, and that they set chairs for their papa and mamma first; even little Edith was set up to table in her high chair, and behaved quite properly. I saw that the pudding was helped first, and this, I suppose, was for economy, and a very good plan, I should think, to prevent children eating too much. There was no improper behaviour in this family.

Emily took charge of little Edith, and Edward sat between Rosa and Alfred.

Mr. Percival told about his visits to some of his poor people that morning, and

drew the contrast between the comforts of his own home and their privations, yet observing how pleased he had been to see among them generally a contented mind and much gratitude for any little favour done to them. This was a good opportunity for Edward and Emily to make their request that they might be permitted to take old Sally some dinner, and you may be sure they were not forbidden.

Though I was only a silly little mouse, I could not help seeing what a great difference there was between Mr. Percival's family and Mr. Morley's; the former were poor in comparison with the latter, and yet the poorest were the happiest; and I thought to myself that children might be loved very dearly without being spoiled by indulgence.

The dinner was now over and the cloth removed; little Edith on mamma's knee,

and Rosa and Alfred on two low stools on each side of papa, they sat near the open window, and had the sweet flowers before them that Emily had gathered.

A very pleasant group they appeared all together. The elder ones had started for the old woman's cottage; of course I remained where I had hidden myself, and only knew what passed in the parlour.

"O papa," said little Rosa, "do tell us about old John, who brought us such fine rosy-cheeked apples. I heard you say you were very sorry for him. What is the matter?"

Here baby's voice chimed in, "Tell bout poor John—nice appies, pa."

"Ah, you sly rogue!" said Mr. Percival, "you love the rosy-cheeked apples, don't you? Well, Alfred shall fetch you one; run my boy for the basket."

"Yes, papa,"—and the little boy jumped up from his stool,—"but please don't begin



about old John till I come back, for I want to hear it, and I won't be a minute."

"No, no, don't be afraid," said his papa.

The apples were soon brought, and one was given to baby. She said, "Now one for pa, and one for ma, and one for Ose, and one for Affy."

All this being settled to her entire satisfaction, Mr. Percival said, "And now you want me to tell you about what has happened to poor old John."

"O yes, papa!" exclaimed the children.

"Well, you know, my dears, old John has a granddaughter living with him, and very fond he is of her; no wonder, for she is a good, industrious girl."

"O yes, papa, Susan is a very good girl to her grandfather I know," said little Rosa; "she keeps his cottage so clean, and is so kind to him; and Emily

says that she is the very best girl in the Sunday school."

"Yes," said Mr. Percival, "she is the best little girl I know."

"O papa!" again broke in Rosa, "not better than Emmy; no one *can* be better than Emmy;" and I saw that her cheeks grew redder, and her sweet eyes sparkled till I fancied there must be a drop of water in them.

"Well, well, my little pleader," said papa, "I do not say she *is* better than dear Emily; but she is indeed a very, very good girl, and now I am going to tell you what old John intended to do for her, and how he was disappointed. You know the beautiful apple-tree that these apples came from?"

"O yes, papa; it is the finest in the village; I remember in the spring how it was entirely covered with blossoms, and afterwards all the branches were so loaded

with fruit that John had to put poles to prop them up, for fear they should be broken; he brought the first apples that he pulled to us."

"Well, now, little chatterbox, let me go on," said papa. "John thought he would give Susan a pleasant surprise; his apples were to have been gathered on Saturday morning early, and he intended to take them to market, and buy a new frock for the little girl with the money he got for them.

"Sad to say, when he rose at five o'clock there was scarcely an apple left on the tree; some wicked, mischievous person had taken them in the night, and all the poor old man's hopes disappeared with his apples."

"Oh, how cruel, papa," exclaimed both the children, "to rob such a poor man!"

"I know," said Alfred, "how wicked

it is to steal *anything*, but to take what belonged to such a very poor person—oh, I wonder who could have done it ! do you think any one in the village is wicked enough ? ”

“ I *hope* not my dear, but I really cannot say ; there are some naughty, disobedient boys and girls among us, and if they are not afraid of breaking one commandment, they may break another ; however, crime never goes unpunished, in one way or other, and it is most likely the thief will be found out, though the poor man may not get the value of his apples again. We must try and think of some way in which we can help John. But here comes Edward and Emily ; we will hear what they have to say.”

“ Oh papa, what a pleasure there is in being able to do good ! ” said Edward, as he just then entered the room with his sister ; “ I never saw any one so thank-

ful for a little kindness done as poor old Sally."

"The Scripture tells us that it is more blessed to give than to receive, and you have found it so, my dear children."

"Indeed we have, papa," exclaimed Emily. "When old John brought us those fine apples, though I was obliged to him for them, I did not feel half as much pleasure as I felt to-day in doing a little service to old Sally. But have you heard, papa, about the loss the old man has had?"

"Yes, my dears; we were just talking about it when you came in."

"Sally told *us*, papa, and she couldn't help crying about it, poor old thing. Edward and I have been thinking and consulting all the way home how we might try to make up the loss."

"That's just what papa said, Emily, and now *we* are altogether, *we* shall see what can be done," exclaimed the warm

hearted little Rosa, with some degree of importance, making her small self one of the party.

“Yes, now *we* will see,” said Mrs. Percival, laughing; “*you* shall be the first to offer advice, my little right-hand maiden; you often help me with an idea when I am at a loss.”

“Oh, *that* is not often, dear mamma,” said Emily; “but I have really been thinking what is to be done, and what I mean to do if you and papa approve.

“Do you remember those nice comforters that I knitted last winter for the children? Mrs. Davis said how pretty they were, and how much she should like to have some just the same for her four little girls. Now, if you will give your consent, mamma, I will buy the wool with mine and Edward’s pocket-money, and I will knit the comforters, and ask Mrs. Davis to purchase them of me; then we shall

be able to get the frock for Susan, and John shall give it to her."

"Oh, that will be so nice!" said Rosa. "I wish I could knit, that I might help you, Emily."

"You shall do something towards the frock, dear Rosa, depend upon it," said her kind sister.

"I thought Emily would hit upon some plan," said Mrs. Percival. "I am very glad, my dear girl, that you are able and willing to undertake this office for our poor, deserving neighbour."

"Mamma," said this good child, "I am not going to neglect the work I have to do for you on account of this, nor what I have to do for my brothers and sisters; but I mean to get up just two hours earlier every morning till the comforters are finished."

"And I," said Edward, "will get up at the same time and read to you, Emily,

while you work ; then we shall have learnt a great deal, as well as done a great deal, before breakfast."

"But," said Mr. Percival, "you must not do anything to injure your health, my children : prudence is a virtue not to be disregarded, though her sweet sister charity comes to us in a lovelier form."

"Oh ! never fear for us, papa ; it is delightful to be up in the early morning, when the dew sparkles on the grass and flowers like diamonds, and everything is fresh and beautiful."

"Why, you are becoming poetical in your enthusiasm, my little girl. Well, you shall do as you propose, and I trust you will be successful in your good work. But how did you find old Sally to-day ?"

"Very poorly, papa. She says she should so like to see you when you can spare time, for it is all the comfort she



has except her Bible, and it was you who taught her to love that."

The conversation was here interrupted by a rap at the door, and Mrs. Percival said, "Emily, my dear, take the children into the nursery and hear them their lessons; I may be engaged for a little while."

All went quietly out but baby, who had fallen asleep in mamma's lap, and was transferred to the sofa.

As I began to feel very hungry, I contrived to escape from my hole and ventured into the kitchen. Here everything was neat and tidy; the plates had all been washed and ranged on a shelf, and Mary, the little maid, was just sweeping up the fireside. She did not see me, so I crept into the pantry, and climbing up the wall, found myself on a stone bench, where there were two or three plates, a bowl with bread, and another with milk in. I wish I had

contented myself with eating some scraps from the plates; they were put by, I dare say, for some poor body, all except the cheese, and that was so nice that I ate till I made myself quite thirsty; then I thought if I could only get at the bowl of milk, how delicious it would be to have a drink. Many a jump I gave, and many a time I fell back, till I was almost tired of trying; but I just gave one more, and there I stood, balancing myself in a very uneasy position on the edge of the bowl. How was I to get my nose in? Stretch as I would, I couldn't reach the milk; at last I stretched rather too much, and in I popped in an instant.

Oh! I cannot tell you, my little reader, the horror I felt. I quite forgot that I was thirsty; my eyes, nose, and mouth were stopped with cream, and I could scarcely draw my breath. Many, many vain attempts I made to get out. I tried

first on one side, then on another; 'twas of no use, the sides were slippery, and I could get no footing; at last I became so feeble from exertion that I felt myself sinking. Just then, however, the door of the pantry was opened, and in came little Mary.

“Oh! if there isn't a mouse in the milk, I declare,” said she,—“nasty thing!” and seizing poor me by the tail, she flung me to the other side of the pantry. Stunned as I was, I knew that if I did not try to escape now, I might be caught and killed; so I ran as fast as my little legs would carry me to the first hole in the wall, and as soon as Mary had taken her departure I made straight for the front door, and soon found myself in the garden, where I had first seen the good brother and sister.

I was very loath to leave such a pleasant family, but somehow or other, though I

had never been cautioned against taking what did not belong to me, I felt ashamed and sorry for the mischief I had done them, and, to say all the truth, I was rather alarmed lest there should be a search made after me ; so I did not slacken my pace, but ran along the garden, and crept through a hedge into the road. I had suffered so much that I resolved to be more cautious for the future ; but having left the Percivals, I think I had better enter on my new adventure in a new chapter.

## CHAPTER III.

WELL, dear reader, I told you that I got into the road, where scrambling along by the side, so as to be out of sight of any passer-by, I came at last to a rough farmhouse, not very far from Mr. Percival's, but a different looking place altogether. There was no pretty garden for flowers, no nice palings in front of the house, no trellis-work before the door, but there were ducks, and geese, and hens, and pigs, all running about wherever they liked. These were no companions for me, so I determined to find my way into the house. It was not very difficult to do this, as the doors all stood wide open, and even the pigs might have entered if they had chosen to do so.

I made therefore straight for the kitchen, and, seeing a cupboard-door a

little open, I squeezed in, and hid myself behind some jars.

There I lay quietly for some time ; at length I heard a great scuffling and noise in the passage, and in rushed a rude dirty boy—a girl, a little younger, following him. He threw the cupboard-door open and pretended to put something in, while I lay trembling all over for fear he should find me out.

“Gi’e me my bird, Jack,” said the girl, who was his sister ; “gi’e it to me now ; I catched it, and it’s mine, and I’ll hav’t too.”

“Will yer, though,” said Jack, “but yer won’t, I can tell yer ; I’s e got it, and I’ll kep it, my lass ; I’s e goin to kill it, and roast it for supper.”

Oh ! the horrible fright I was in when I heard this ; for I felt sure if the cruel boy found me out he would kill and eat me too.

"If yer don't gi'e me the bird, Jack," said the girl, trying to snatch it from him, "I'll ca' mother, and she'll mak' yer."

"Will she, though?" said Jack, "I'd like her to try, that's all; what d'ye think I care for outh'er you or mother? I tell you I shan't gi' yer the bird."

"Jane!" bawled a coarse voice from the yard, "thee father's comin, hast 'er got tea ready for 'im?"

"Mother, Jack won't gi'e me my bird!"

"Ne'er mind the nasty thing, but get the tea, lass; else thu'lt catch it, I can tell thee."

Jane did not seem to regard either father or mother, but darting after Jack, as he was running off with the bird, she upset a round table on which was placed a pitcher of new milk for the tea. Of course the jug was broken, and the milk wasted; and just at this unfortunate moment a tall raw-boned man entered,

who had a very gruff voice, and a very surly look.

“Hallo! what’s aw this about, ye noisy whelps?” said Farmer Humphreys; for that, I found, was the man’s name.

“Father, Jack won’t gi’e me my bird!” said Jane, “he’s run off wi’ it.”

“I’ll gi’e thee a clout on the head if thou doesn’t come an clear this mess away, thou dirty hussey, and get tea ready. Where’s thee mother?”

“She’s a-washing in back kitchen,” said the girl, beginning sulkily to clear up the broken pieces, and to wipe up the milk, in the most slovenly manner.

“There’s nought *but* washing, and dirt, and noise in *our* house, I think,” said the farmer; “it’s no comfort to come home any how.”

Jane began to set the tea-things; and when that was done, she called her mother to come to tea.



But now arose a new scene of discord, Farmer Humphreys insisting that *his* comfort was never attended to, and his wife declaring that *she* was a perfect slave, and might work herself to death, without any one caring for *her*.

So the tea-time passed in grumbling and scolding, and when it was over, Mrs. Humphreys returned to her washing, and the farmer went to spend his evening at the little public-house in the village.

*I*, a tiny mouse, felt sorry for the two rude children. I said to myself, "They have had no loving teachers in their father and mother—what can then be expected from *them*?"

I saw plainly too, that if people *would* not curb their bad tempers, they *could* not be happy; and that if people did not try to subdue their *selfishness* by endeavouring to do good to others, they would lose much more comfort than they

gained by their efforts to please themselves.

This was what *I*, a poor little mouse, thought about it ; but fine sentiment did not prevent me from feeling the cravings of hunger, and I began seriously to consider how I should get some supper. Two or three times I fancied there was a very nice smell not far from me : so, turning my nose in that direction, I began to creep as silently as possible between the jars—and oh ! kind reader, how surprised and delighted I was to find the neatest little house you ever saw, with nice wire palings all round it, and a pretty little hole just large enough for me to creep into, and there, in the middle of the house lay a piece of delicious cheese that quite made my mouth water to look at.

All this appeared as if it had been prepared on purpose for my comfort, poor foolish, ignorant thing that I was ; I

actually believed that such was the case. Could I suspect that any one would be so cruel as to try to entice me into a trap? Alas! so it proved: I had no sooner squeezed myself through the little round door, and supped off the splendid piece of cheese, than, turning myself to take a peep at my new abode, I found that what seemed a door was guarded all round with iron spikes, so close together that it was quite impossible I could ever get out. Here then was a terrible scrape I had run into; I absolutely squeaked with horror. But how were my terrors increased when I heard Jack say to his sister—

“I say! let’s look whether there be a mouse in the trap; I’m sure I heard one squeak.”

“Ay; let’s see,” said Jane. The jars were removed accordingly, and I was dragged forth in my wiry prison by that

cruel boy, who held the trap up with great delight, and said to his sister—  
“Run for t’ cat, Jane! won’t we have fine sport?”

Away ran the girl, bringing back in her arms a huge monster of a cat, so sleek and fat, that I’m sure the creature needed no such tiny morsel as myself; however, the wretch of a boy had dragged me out by the tail, and there was I hanging and struggling.

“Now Jane, you hold t’ cat, and I’ll kep mouse by t’ tail, while she mak’s a dart at it. Don’t let puss get it too soon; mind, ke’p her tight or she’ll slip through yer hands.”

“Ay, ay!” said Jane, “I’ll tak’ care.”

Oh! kind-hearted little reader, may you never feel the pain of body and mind I was then made to undergo. Tightly grasped by the tail, within sight, and

nearly within reach of my terrible foe, just think of the torment I endured. My struggles only increased my pain, and as I darted first to this side, then to that, to escape the cruel jaws that were open to receive me, bursts of laughter arose from these two hard-hearted children.

At last the cat made a desperate plunge, and slipping through Jane's arms, in her eagerness jumped fairly over poor me; while Jack, taken by surprise, suffered my tail to slip through his fingers, and like lightning I darted to a place of safety before Miss Puss had time to recover herself. Thus I escaped the horrid death with which I had been threatened.

I felt now that I was safe both from the cat and boy; so I lay panting and listening, to hear what Jack and his sister would say, for I was sure there would be a quarrel between them.

"It's all along of you," said Jack, "that the mouse got away; I tel't yer to hold the cat tight, you stupid thing!"

"I'm no more stupid than you," said Jane; "why did you let the mouse run off?—besides, I'm glad on it, because you killed my bird, and now I've had my revenge."

"What did Mr. Percival tell yer when you wor saying yer catechism on Sunday?" said Jack. "Didn't he say you wor to bear no malice?"

"Ay, but he told me, too, that I must mind what father and mother said, and I heard father say that he'd be revenged on Farmer Sykes for breaking down t' hedge; and I know he was too, for I saw him leave t' gate open and let the cows go into Sykes's field."

"Sarve t' farmer right too," said Jack, "he'll not brack doon our hedge again, I'se warrant."

“Ah! but mabbe he’ll do sommat quite as bad, though, to have his revenge again.”

Now, as I was only a little mouse, I did not know much about the matter; but it did seem to me, that if people went on revenging themselves upon one another in that way, there could never be any end of quarrelling.

I was quite sick of all I had heard, and seen, and *felt* too, and was determined to get away as soon as possible from such a rude, rough set: so I made my way under the boards, for I dared not run the risk of being seen, and I was soon once more in the open fields. I went towards a little shed, and crept in among some dry leaves and lay down, determined to keep quiet so long as I did not feel very hungry.

I thought over all that had happened lately, and I said to myself, “Oh, how

much happier good children must be than naughty ones—I wonder they are not all good ;” but then I reflected how differently Mr. Percival’s children were brought up from Farmer Humphreys’; and I wished that all parents were like the Percivals,—kind, thoughtful and affectionate.

But it is time now to turn again to my own affairs, and I dare say my young friends are very much interested in my welfare ; at least it is pleasant for me to think so. It was a very fine day ; and after I had sufficiently rested myself, I sallied out again to the warm green fields. I kept, however, close in by the hedge side generally, as affording me a shelter should I chance to meet with an enemy ; and here in the hedge I spied the snuggest, softest, warmest little nest I had ever seen—quite a nice round ball.

I was just going to put my head in,



when I found that it was already occupied by a sweet, pretty creature, very like myself in form—but, oh! much more beautiful in colour; its coat was a bright yellow or orange, soft and woolly, and it had such bright black eyes. I thought to myself, this very beautiful little creature must be good, and as I had heard our mother speak sometimes of our cousins the dormice, I felt sure that this was one of them, and I was quite glad to have met with a relation: so I asked the little fellow if he would kindly let me share his nest for a time.

“No!” said the selfish thing, “I don’t know any of your family, and I don’t *want* to know any of you; for I am sure, by your coat, that you are a vulgar set.”

Now, though I felt very angry, I intended only to expostulate with my cousin on the unkind and rude remarks he had made. I was determined not to give him

any *real* cause to say I was vulgar; though I was but a mouse I knew very well that a fine coat or a shabby coat had nothing to do with people's manners, and I knew I could behave quite as well in my dun-coloured coat,—ay, and a great deal better as it turned out,—as my little proud, conceited cousin in his flaming bright jacket.

And though I had not had much experience, I knew that there were finely dressed boys and girls who could be very vulgar and rude, and very plainly dressed children who could behave like little gentlemen and ladies.

Just as I was going to give master dormouse a piece of my mind, however, a very pretty little girl came by, and seeing the round ball of a nest on the ground, she seized it up, and exclaimed with great joy—

“Oh Clara! see what I have found;

a sweet little dormouse in its nest. Oh! what a soft, beautiful creature it is; I will take it home and keep it in a box in our bed-room, and get some food and some leaves for it."

"It is indeed a sweet, pretty little thing," said her sister, stooping to examine it, while *I*, the poor, plain, despised cousin, under favour of my dark coat, which had been so ill thought of, slipped away, and escaped imprisonment. Glad enough I was, I assure you, dear reader, that my ill-natured relation had refused me a share of his nest, yet I was sufficiently interested in his fate to follow the sisters at a short distance. They soon came to a nice-looking house, with a garden before it, like Mr. Percival's, only I think it was not so pretty.

As I wanted to see what would be done with the dormouse, I did not, as usual, make my way to the skirting-board, but

watched an opportunity, and followed the two girls upstairs to their bedroom; there they deposited their treasure in a small square box, and putting in some crumbs of bread and some dry moss, they shut the lid, and went downstairs.—“Well,” thought I to myself, “I had rather provide my own food, or seek it all over the house, than have ever so much given to me, and be confined in a dark cage;” for oh! dear reader, I thought of the terrible trap, and all that I had suffered. However, there was no fear of such a fate for my pretty selfish cousin—he was in better hands than I had been; still I thought myself the best off of the two, and congratulated myself again on my dun-coloured coat.

I had not, however, remained long under the bed, where I had hidden myself, before I began to feel sorry that I was left upstairs, as I could there find

out nothing about the family into whose house I had intruded; besides, it was a long time since I had had anything to eat, and I felt sure that I was a great way off the pantry.

I remembered, however, that the girls had given some crumbs of bread to the dormouse before they shut him up; and in the hope of finding some scattered on the carpet, I ran out of my hiding-place. Here, indeed, I found a plentiful repast, and feeling no fear of boy, or girl, or cat, I regaled myself at leisure, and played and whisked about to my heart's content. At last, having tired myself out, I ran under cover again, and soon fell quietly to sleep. I was awakened in the morning by hearing some one say—

“Rosa! Rosa! come, dear, get up, or we shall be too late for the Sunday school.”

“Oh, Clara. I can't go this morning;

you take my class for me, do dear, I'm so very sleepy, I shall be stupid all day if I get up now; besides, you know I am going to wear my new frock, and if I put it on to go to the school, the forms might dirty it; and very likely all the girls would be staring at me, instead of minding their lessons; and I'm sure that would not be right."

"Rosa," said her sister (and I thought her voice seemed sad), "how sorry I am to hear you talk in this manner. Would you neglect your Sunday duty among the poor children for the sake of putting on a new frock? You say you don't like to be stared at, and it is most likely that anything new would distract the attention of the children; then why put your new frock on to-day?"

"When am I to put it on, then," said Rosa, petulantly, "if not on Sunday?"

"Come, come, never mind the new

frock, there's a dear good little sister," said Clara affectionately; "you know you have been so punctual and so diligent with your class, that Mr. Percival has given you three new books for you to reward the best of your scholars with; would you like that *I* should take them and give them away?"

"Dear Clara," said Rosa, jumping up suddenly, so that I quite started again, "I will dress myself as quickly as possible, and we will set off for school as soon as ever' the breakfast is over. You always make me feel that it is a pleasure to be good, and neither you nor dear Mr. Percival shall be made sorry on my account."

Then I thought to myself what a wonderful effect a few kind words may have upon a child: they are much more effective than scolding; they are better even than telling a child its duty; for, coming from

a loving heart, they seem to produce love.

Very soon the sisters were dressed, and went downstairs. Though I was left behind, and did not hear what passed, I felt sure they would be very happy at the school, for they were going to do good.

As I wished to know more about these little girls, and what kind of parents they had, as soon as everything appeared quiet, I crept out of the room and ran downstairs.

I did not hear any one stirring, except in the kitchen; so I concluded the family had gone to church; I therefore ventured into the parlour, a neat, pretty room, that looked into the garden. There were a few, very few, crumbs left on the carpet; so, rather than run any risk,—for I had learnt some caution by my past troubles,—I contented myself with what I found there. All at once I heard a strange,



harsh voice, such as I had never heard before, say—

“ Ah, you rogue ! ” and almost immediately after, “ Pretty Poll . ”

Of course I felt sure that “ the rogue ” meant me; but who or where was “ Pretty Poll ; ” for there was no person to be seen in the room. Depend upon it, I didn’t remain long where I then was, but ran as fast as my legs would carry me to a hiding-place, taking care, however, that while I was not seen, I could see. So peeping about from one part of the room to another, at last I spied a large wire house or cage,—as I afterwards heard it called,—something like the one I got into at Farmer Humphreys, only a *very* great deal larger. In it I now saw, oh ! such an immense bird, with a great hooked mouth ; I’m sure it could have eaten me up at a single mouthful ; but I was at a safe distance, and did not fear my gentle-

man, especially as he was in a shut-up cage. What I wondered the most at was to hear the thing talk like a man; not quite so plainly, for sometimes I could not tell what it said.

Well, it went on nearly all the morning, talking, singing, scolding, laughing, as if it was quite delighted at the noise it made. Sometimes it called out "Rosa" and "Clara" so pertly that I was quite disgusted at its impudence. But what it seemed the most fond of saying was, "Pretty Poll, pretty Poll."

I was tired of hearing so much of this "Pretty Poll," and I wondered who it could be;—"Some little girl, perhaps," I thought, "that the creature is fond of." Well, do you know I found out afterwards that it was its own name it was repeating—nasty conceited thing. I did not think it at all pretty, though it was so proud of itself; and I'm sure if it had

been ever so beautiful, I could not have liked it, because of its noise and conceit. "Just like the little Morleys," I thought; but *I like* gentle and loving children best.

At last the family came from church; and, oh! to see the fuss the bird made to attract their attention; climbing up the cage, then down again, strutting up and down, and shouting "Rosa," and "Clara," and "Pretty Poll," till it almost deafened one.

At last the kind little Rosa went up to it, and said, "Poor Polly, didn't we take any notice of you; give us a kiss, Polly;" and to be sure the creature put its great ugly beak through the bars, and touched the rosy lips of the sweet child.

Oh, I can't bear that bird! I wonder she could seem so fond of such a great ugly thing;—nobody ever thought, I believe, of petting me.

Now you will see, dear reader, that all this time I was giving way to a bad and envious temper, which would have been very shocking in a child ; but then I am *only a mouse*, so it does not so much signify ; yet you see it made me feel unhappy, when I need not have been so.

I saw Rosa go to the cupboard after this, and get a piece of sugar for Poll ; and I thought again, "What a fine thing it was to be a bird, to be taken care of, and to be fed by a nice little girl."

But now I must tell you something about Mr. and Mrs. Lacy, the parents of Clara and Rosa, who came in with them from church. Nice, pleasant-looking people they were ; and I felt sure they were good people, for they spoke so kindly to their children, and had such an affectionate way with them.

"Rosa, my dear," said Mrs. Lacy, "the dinner will be brought in immediately,

you must leave off talking to your favourite, for you have other things to attend to; you remember our maxim, don't you?"

"O yes, mamma," said the little girl; "I do indeed,— 'A right time for all things.' You see I know it, but I don't *always* think of it; but Clara, I believe, *never* forgets it."

"Not often, indeed, I am happy to say," replied Mrs. Lacy.

Away skipped Rosa to take off her bonnet; Clara was already seated at the table.

"My dear," said her papa, "as you will have to return to the school so soon after dinner, I will write out Mr. Percival's text for you, and a sketch of his sermon; so that you may fill it up when you come home in the evening."

"Thank you, papa; a sketch of the sermon always enables me to speak to

the children better; for then I can see whether they remember anything about it from one week's end to the other. I always tell them beforehand what I mean to do; and some of the bigger girls will find out the texts, and write them down, to be ready for me."

"A very good plan, Clara; it would not be well to take them by surprise."

"Would you like to go down to see old John Melburn after tea?" said Mrs. Lacy to her husband; "the children can go with us; the old man, I know, will be so glad for us to visit him."

"I will go with pleasure," said Mr. Lacy; "he is a worthy old man. I see, Clara, that his grand-daughter is in your class; I could not help noticing how very nice and neat she looked this morning."

"Yes, I noticed that, papa," said Rosa; "she did look very nice indeed."

I saw Clara cast a glance at her sister, and the little girl blushed so; I dare say she thought of her own new frock, and how happy she had been, though she had not put it on.

"I am very curious to know something more about that new frock," said Clara, "for we were told that John's orchard had been robbed; and I thought he would not be able to buy anything new for Susan."

"I dare say he has met with some kind friend," said Mrs. Lacy, "in the time of need."

"Did *you* give it to her, mamma?" said Clara.

"No, indeed, my dear, I did not; nor can I conceive who did; for we are only a poor set in the village, and none of us have much to give away."

"Ah! but I know you very often do give things to the poor people, even if

you go without yourself, mamma," said Rosa.

"Hush! dear Rosa," said her mother. "*We* have always *enough*; and surely sometimes we may deny ourselves a trifle, that we may give to those who have not. Now you must go, my children, for it is school-time; Jane is ready, and I have told her to put some teacakes in a basket, that we may take them with us when we go to see John: we will not go empty-handed."

Away went the girls, and Mr. Lacy, I saw, sat down to write, and Mrs. Lacy took a large book and read to herself. Sometimes her husband asked her to find some text for him, and sometimes they sat and talked together. I didn't understand what it was about, but I thought they seemed very happy, as good people generally are.

All this time that noisy Poll had been



asleep, and as there was nothing particular to attract my attention, I went to sleep too, and didn't awake until the family had returned from their visit to John's cottage, which I shall tell you about in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV.

“It is just like dear Emily Percival,” said Clara, when they were all seated together again in the parlour; “it is just like her, to think of such a way to help old John. How hard she must have worked, and how quiet she has been about it; for I never heard a word of it till to-day.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Lacy, “that is the chief beauty of Emily’s character; she is so gentle and humble; she never talks of what she does, yet she seems to be always doing good to some one. I hear of her constantly in my visits to our poor neighbours. She reads to one, works for another, takes flowers or vegetables from her own little garden, or shares a part of her own dinner often

with her poor old people, as she calls them."

"And," said Rosa, "she makes bags for the boys' marbles, and pincushions and needle-cases for the girls, when she hears a good account of them; but who told you, mamma, how Emily got the money to buy the frock; for neither old John nor Susan know?"

"It was Mrs. Davis, my dear. When I called on her one day, she showed me some beautiful comforters of the children's, and she said, "Who do you think knitted them?—why, that dear, kind-hearted little girl Emily Percival. She told me frankly that she wanted to buy a frock for Susan Melburn with the money I should pay her for them." Mrs. Davis added, "You may tell your girls this, for I know *they* won't repeat it: it would hurt Miss Percival's feelings if she thought it was known."

"Oh! I wish I was like Emily Percival," said Rosa.

"*You are* like her, dear Clara, and I will try to be good, like you."

"Mr. Percival and his family have indeed been a blessing to this village," said Mr. Lacy, "and for our own sakes, I hope they will long remain among us, though, with the small income he has, it is wonderful how he contrives to do so much good."

"I'm sure," said Clara, "I don't know what Rosa and I would do without Emily and Edward."

"Here they are," said Rosa, "I declare. Here is Mr. Percival, and Mrs. Percival, and Emily, and Edward, and Alfred, and little Agnes. Oh! I am so glad;" and she ran to open the door.

As the visitors walked in, that nasty, noisy parrot set up such a scream and attracted so much attention, that I could

scarcely hear a word that was said, and as the whole party soon went out to walk in the garden, I thought it a good opportunity to run away and find some supper; for it seemed a long time since I had breakfasted.

As I had no wish to leave Mr. Lacy's house in a hurry, for they were the nicest people I had seen except the Percivals, I determined to be very cautious; but alas! ill-luck seemed to follow me in all my searches after food. I suppose I was too hasty, or too thoughtless, or too greedy (I have told you, dear reader, that this latter was my prevailing propensity).

As soon as the party quitted the room I slipped out, and ran along the passage, at the end of which a door stood a little open, just wide enough to allow a wee thing like me to squeeze through. In there I went, and found that it was a sort of storeroom, or pantry.

I was not long in scrambling up to the shelf, and here I found some nice cakes and tarts; so I made up my mind to enjoy myself and to have a regular feast; for it was long since I had tasted such dainties.

I was so full of enjoyment that I forgot all about cats and traps, rude boys and servants; I was, indeed, too busy for anything but eating. I am ashamed to say that I tasted everything, and at last I began to feel rather sick, and I'm sure my little reader won't be at all sorry for me, for I deserved to be ill; not so much I think, however, as greedy boys and girls; for they *ought* to know better.

Well, just as I was preparing to jump off the shelf, that I might take a turn in the garden to refresh myself and relieve the sickness, in came the servant and found me in the very act.

"O the nasty mice!" said she; "I do

wish mistress would set a trap, or get a cat, or summut; for they get at every mortal thing."

While she was uttering these words, she did not remain idle; for, making a dive at me, I was well-nigh taken prisoner in a moment; but I slipped behind a dish that stood up against the wall. It was but a poor defence; for she pressed the edge of it against me so hard that I fairly squealed again; then putting her other hand behind, she caught me by the tail and drew me out. I thought now it was all over, with me, for she said she would drown me in a pail of water. I made, however; one desperate effort for my life,—it seemed my only chance; so I turned myself up and bit her hand sharply.

"Drat the mouse!" exclaimed she, giving her hand a fling, and letting go of my tail, which sent me violently against the wall, but did not at all deprive me of

the use of my legs. I was through the open door and out of her sight in an instant. In another few minutes I lay panting under a haystack, where I will remain until the next chapter.



## CHAPTER V.

WHEN I awoke in the morning,—for I soon fell asleep after I had got under shelter, the sun had scarcely risen, and I felt rather chilly; however, after a few pleasant gambols, such as popping in and out of the little holes in the stack, climbing up the wooden legs on which it stood, and frisking with my tail, I got tolerably warm and comfortable; and as soon as the sun had fairly risen, I began to look about me.

It was a bright, clear, beautiful morning; all was still but the little birds, and they made noise enough, I'm sure. Such a chirping, twittering, chattering, flitting, fluttering, whirling, whizzing, I had never heard before: they seemed as if they did not know how to show their happiness enough. I thought, "Oh, what a fine

thing it must be to have wings!" especially as I saw one or two of the birds fly up into the blue sky, till they were so high that I could see them no longer; and as they got higher and higher, they sang so sweetly and so loud, that I thought they would split their little throats.

"O," said I, "how delightful it must be to be a bird!" and I felt myself getting quite envious. Just at that moment, I heard the most horrid sound I had ever heard in my life, and close to where I was, there were three little birds dropped down, all bloody, and quite dead.

Oh, the fright I was in! But I had the sense to run up the stack and creep into a hole; and then a great stupid-looking lad came up, and picking up the poor bleeding birds, walked off with them, and *I*—yes *I*—congratulated myself that I was

a mouse, and not a bird; and I thought for the future I would learn to be contented; for, on the whole, I lived a pleasant life enough.

Leaving the little twittering birds to their play, and the merry larks to finish their morning song, I rambled forth in search of another home; for, as I have before told my young readers, I did not like living in the fields.

Quickly and quietly, therefore, I ran along by the hedge-side till I came to a little wicket-gate, and peeping underneath, I saw a young girl with her frock tucked up, weeding the garden. Very diligently she appeared to work; for though it was such early morning, and quite cool, she had frequently to rise up, and throwing back her hair, wipe her hot face with her apron.

She was weeding a bed of fine onions, and had already done more than half of

it. I heard her say to herself, "I wish I may be able to finish it before breakfast, for grandfather would be so surprised and pleased to see it done."

When I heard her say "grandfather," I thought, "Why this must be little Susan, the young girl that Miss Percival bought the frock for;" and I felt so glad that I had come to the house of good, honest people.

As I could not help Susan with her work, and as I did not at all like the dew, which made me feel very chilly again, I ran into the cottage. A very different one indeed it was to Mr. Percival's; there was no skirting-board to hide behind, the walls were plaster, and the floor, dear reader, I really cannot say what it was made of; but it was not wood, nor stone, nor brick,—it was all broken and uneven.

There was a cupboard beside the fire-

place for coals and wood; and into this I crept for the present, thinking prudently, for once in my life, that it would be better to wait for my breakfast until I saw what old John and Susan had got for theirs.

It was scarcely possible for me to remain still, for I felt full of life and spirits; so I climbed up the sticks, and scratched about the coals; I even tasted them; but I took care not to swallow any of the nasty stuff. You would have been surprised, I am sure, could you have heard the noise I contrived to make, when you consider that I am such a very little body.

I managed at last to wake old John (who slept in one corner of the room) with my uproar, though he did not get up just then. I expect that my coat, dark as it was, had gained a considerable quantity of dirt in my rummaging among the coals, and if I had had the pretty

dormouse's suit on, I should have been disfigured for life; but plain dress always wears best, and I am quite content now with my drab coat; for I'm sure if I made myself ever so dirty, no one would take the trouble to wash me.

At last climbing up a piece of stick that stuck up higher than the rest, I whisked my tail against a little saucepan that hung upon the wall, and down it came rattling among the coals, and I tumbling after it.

In a moment I heard old John stump out of bed with his stick, and in another minute he was at the cupboard; but you may believe that I didn't wait for the old gentleman; my motions were rather quicker than his, and there were plenty of holes for me to make my escape at; so his search after me was in vain: I lay safe and snug while he was poking and beating about the coals with his stick.

One thing, however, I was sorry for,— I had made John get up, perhaps, before Susan had finished her weeding, and she would be disappointed in her wish. I heard the old man, after he was dressed, go to the door of a little room and call “Susan, Susan;” but there was no answer; so he opened the door; but Susan was not there. Then he hobbled very quickly to the one that led into the garden, and there was the industrious girl working away still.

“Oh, why did you get up so soon, grandfather?” said she; “I wanted so much to finish this onion-bed before you saw it.”

I had crept out of my hole again, for I did not feel much afraid of these good people, and as the cupboard door stood open, I could see Susan, who came up to her grandfather, her cheeks all glowing with health, and her merry eyes sparkling

with pleasure, though she said she was sorry ; and old John looked so happy and so proud, as he stood beside her, and he said—

“ You shall finish your work now before breakfast, my little girl ; I will go and light the fire and boil the porridge, and call you when it is ready.”

“ O, thank you, dear grandfather ; I shall have finished my weeding by that time, I know ; ” and away tripped Susan to her work again.

As I knew very well that the sticks would be wanted for lighting the fire, I popped back again pretty quickly into my hole, and remained there until the breakfast was ready ; then I ventured out again ; but I soon saw to my sorrow that there would be no breakfast for me, without some adventure, for there were no crumbs on the floor ; nothing but a very,



very thin scattering of meal from the making of the porridge.

A jug of milk, which had been got from Farmer Humphreys, stood on the little round table beside the two basins of breakfast; and now, as all was ready, the old man went to call Susan.

"I have just finished, grandfather," said she; "isn't it well to get that job done before the sun is hot? and how nice it is to have breakfast all ready to sit down to, for I am so hungry."

"Ay, but you mustn't get up so early again, Susy dear; you'll be making yourself ill."

"Do I look *ill*, grandfather?" said Susan, laughing, and glancing at a little looking-glass which hung above the stool where she had been washing her hands. "I'm sure my cheeks are red enough, and I should not be so hungry if I had hurt myself with working. O grandfather,"

continued Susan,—and I saw her eyes fill with tears, “ever since I got that frock which dear, good Miss Percival brought you to give me, and since I heard how she got the money to buy it, I have thought I could not work hard enough to show you and her that I would try to deserve your kindness. Only think of *her* getting up two hours earlier every morning, that she might work for me!”

“I do, I do think of it,” said the old man, with much emotion; “and though I love you dearly, Susan, I think I love Miss Percival almost as well.”

“Everybody loves her,” said Susan, with delight; “even that naughty Jack Humphreys and his rude sister seem gentle when they come to say a lesson to her on Sundays; and, O grandfather, that puts me in mind of what I was going to tell you before: I am almost sure that Jack stole our apples.”

“Take care, take care, Susan,” said John, “that you don’t judge him wrongfully; for though I know he’s a wild, mischievous lad, I can hardly think he’d be wicked enough to steal, and from such poor folk too.”

“Well, if you had seen him on Sunday, grandfather, when Mr. Percival was explaining the Catechism, and when he came to the commandment, ‘Thou shalt not steal,’ Jack was standing nearly opposite me, and he turned so red, and looked so confused, as Mr. Percival went on talking about the sinfulness of taking even the least thing that did not belong to us, that I could not help the thought coming into my mind that he was guilty.”

“We should not judge him from that alone, Susan; it is not always the guilty who show any shame; and I don’t think you would have thought anything of

Jack's turning red just at that time, if you had not known that he was the worst boy in the village, and that he had often been a cause of trouble to Mr. Percival.

'The wise man says that *'a good name is rather to be chosen than silver,'* and what you have said proves this. Well may we dread a bad name, for he who has one may be accused of faults of which he is quite innocent. I should be sorry to think that Jack, or any other person belonging to our village, took the apples, for it would be worse than a stranger taking them, for everybody here knows how poor we are; besides, we like to think well of our neighbours, you know, my little girl; so we won't conclude that Jack is the thief until we have some proof."

"Grandfather," said Susan, thoughtfully, "you know I have often helped Mrs. Humphreys when she was busy,

and done many little things for Jane, so I have seen a good deal of the family ; and though they often speak crossly to one another, and are very rude and rough, I am sure they are not really unloving, and I think they would be kind to each other if they only *knew how*."

"Yes, Susan, they want teaching *how to be kind* ; and who can do that better than good Mr. Percival ? I'll talk to him about this the next time I see him, for he is so humble, he is not above hearing the opinion of a poor man like myself."

Here the conversation ended ; old John going into the garden to take up some vegetables, and Susan busying herself in washing up the things and sweeping the house.

My little readers will wonder how she came to know the way in which Emily Percival had got the money to buy the frock for her ; and I cannot let them

into that secret, though I can't help thinking that Mrs. Davis, who was a good kind of woman, but fond of a little gossip, had herself betrayed the secret she seemed so anxious that Mrs. Lacy and her daughter should keep.

During all this time, dear reader, don't suppose that I remained quite idle; no, indeed, I was not at my ease in that dirty cupboard, among the sticks and coals; besides, there was nothing to eat there; so, as I had seen the old man put the little tub of oatmeal out of which he had made the porridge upon a shelf above where I was, I searched about for some hole through which I might make my way to it.

I was not long in finding what I wanted, nor long out of the tub when I had got to it, unfortunately. If I had contented myself with the meal that had been scattered at the side, I might have

made a moderate repast, and returned without being discovered to my hiding-place again. But no, that would not do for me. My appetite was very keen; I wanted to have *plenty*, which I knew would be the case if I got *into* the tub; and as to how I was to get *out* again, it never once entered my head.

I had great difficulty in scrambling up the side of the tub, and often slipped back when I was nearly at the top. At last I managed it, and without waiting a moment to consider, dropped in among the meal. For the instant I was almost smothered, my little body had raised such a cloud by plumping in so; but I soon recovered myself, and then I enjoyed such a feast (for I am particularly fond of oatmeal) as I never had before.

I must say it was very greedy and selfish of me, after all that I had heard and seen, to have no consideration for

these poor people ; but I was like a great many naughty children, — I cared for nobody but myself. But they ought to *know* better, and to *be* better, and to *do* better than a mouse ; however, they often get punished for their faults, even though their parents neglect to punish them ; for either they make themselves sick and ill with eating, and are obliged to take nasty physic, or they get into some scrape, as I did.

When I had eaten till I could eat no more (for I am ashamed to say that I never thought of giving over until that was the case), I tried to climb up the tub again, and get out ; but the inside and the outside of the little barrel were very different ; it bulged- out, as I dare say you children know, and it was quite impossible for me with all my efforts to reach the top, or, indeed, come near it. Here was a pretty mess to be in ! I was



sure of being found out and caught in the morning, if I escaped till then, and I was terrified at the idea.

After I had twenty times scrambled up a little way and fallen back again into the meal, I hid myself over head and ears in it, and lay quite still; then, after a while, I heard old John come home to dinner. Of course I could see nothing, but I put my nose out of the meal to take breath, and I smelt a very nice smell,—I think it must have been mashed potatoes; and though, of course, I was not at all hungry, I should have liked a taste.

“Nasty, greedy little thing!” I fancy I hear some children say; but pity the poor ignorant mouse, and take a lesson from it.

There was no potato for me; so I just made the best of my misfortune, and lay still to listen to what old John and Susan would say.

“Ar’n’t you very tired, grandfather?” said the little girl; “you look so.”

“It is very hot, dear, and I came home quickly,” said John; “I had been standing some time talking with Mr. Percival about Jack Humphreys.”

“Oh!” said Susan; “you didn’t tell Mr. Percival what I said to you about him, did you, grandfather?”

“And why not, Susy?”

“Oh, because I am afraid he would think it was wrong of me to have such bad thoughts of a neighbour. His text on Sunday was, ‘Charity thinketh no evil.’”

“But your thoughts were not evil towards Jack, Susan. From what you know of him, and from what you saw of him, you believed that he had taken the apples; and you told me only that I might speak to Mr. Percival about the poor boy, and to do him good, not harm;

for even if he did take the apples, we would not hurt him, you know."

"O no, grandfather," said the girl; "I should not like even his father and mother to know; for his father is so severe, and he might punish Jack so much, that it would only harden him; and his poor mother would be so distressed;—oh! I hope they won't hear of it, if he has stolen the apples!"

At that moment I heard the latch of the door lifted, and then the kind voice of Mr. Percival—I should know that voice from any other.

He said, "Come in, Jack."

Oh, how I wished I could see all the party together, particularly Mr. Percival and that cruel boy who had served me so ill. I wanted once more to see the kind face of the clergyman, and I wanted to see how Jack looked; I felt sure that if anybody could make him sorry

for being naughty, it was Mr. Percival, he had such a loving way even of reproving.

“I have been talking to our young neighbour,” said Mr. Percival, “and while I am *sorry* to say that he *is* the person who stole your apples, John, I am *glad* to say that he is very penitent, and has come to the cottage with me, not only to beg your forgiveness for what he did, but also to make what reparation he can. He has brought you all the pocket-money he has by him, and he assures me he will never spend a penny of what he gets until he has paid you for the apples he took.”

“I’ll never do such a thing again,” said Jack ; and his voice sounded very sad—I think he must have been crying. “I hope, John and Susan, you’ll forgive me this once, and that Mr. Percival will forgive me too.”

*"I have nothing to forgive, Jack,"* said Mr. Percival.

*"O yes, you have, sir ; for I have often stayed away from Sunday-school, or behaved very badly when I was there ; but I'll try to do better, indeed I will, if you'll all forgive me."*

*"And that is all we expect—all we wish, Jack,"* said the kind gentleman ; *"we only want you to be good for the future ; and I'm sure Susan and her grandfather will both forgive you, and shake hands with you, and be friends to you."*

This seemed too much for poor Jack, and he fairly blubbered again, and I think, but I'm not sure, for I could not see them, that Susan cried too, and I thought to myself, *"Well, the next good thing to not doing any wrong is to be sorry for the wrong we have done."*

And now, all being settled in a satisfactory manner, good Mr. Percival took

his leave, and I was left to consider the peril of my situation. It was no use, as I told you before, my trying to escape, I only wearied myself for nothing; so I remained quiet, though with a beating heart, till I should be found out, which I shall tell you about in the next chapter.

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## CHAPTER VI.

"GRANDFATHER," said Susan, "I think we might have some tea this afternoon. As Jack has brought us eighteen pence towards paying for the apples, we can afford it, can't we?"

"That is not what I expected to hear from you, Susy, my little girl. Don't you think we might do something better with the money, which we never expected to get?"

Susan did not answer immediately. Then she said, "You might buy something for yourself, grandfather, or——"

"Stop!" said John, "I am not thinking of myself, Susan, nor of you. Remember, when the means of buying you a frock were taken from us, a good, kind friend came to our aid."

"O yes, dear grandfather, I do indeed

remember; but do you think we ought to give Miss Percival the eighteen pence? I'm afraid she would not like us to offer it to her."

"I am sure she would not, Susan; *that* is not what I meant; but can't we follow her example, and try to do some good with this money to some one who wants it more than we do?"

"O grandfather, that is just what I should like; but who in the village is poorer than we are?"

"Think again, my little girl, and you'll find somebody, I know."

"Ah, yes! I know whom you mean—poor old Sally. Well, I was selfish, dear grandfather; I hope you will forgive me; and I'll tell you what we can buy for old Sally with this eighteen pence.

"You know she has been poorly for some time with the rheumatics. She



told me she caught cold with going to church one wet Sunday and sitting all the time with wet feet, her clogs were so bad. I said, 'Why don't you tell Mr. Percival, Sally?'—'O honey!' said she, 'I wouldn't say a word to him for the world about it. Dear good man! he works so hard, and has such a family and so little to keep them with, it would be a shame and a sin to speak to him of my wants; for I know well enough he'd pinch himself rather than not serve a poor body like me. He's done it, I know, many's the time.'

"Then I thought of my new frock, and what dear Miss Percival had done to get it for me, and I felt sad.

"Oh! I'm ashamed, dear grandfather, that I did not think of all this at once. Shall we buy Sally a pair of clogs with this money?"

"That you shall, my little lass," said

John ; “but here is a sixpence to put to the money, for I fear eighteen pence will not buy them. We shall not feel the want of the sixpence : a poor man may sometimes know the pleasure of doing good.”

The matter was thus settled to the satisfaction of Susan and her grandfather, not at all, I am sorry to say, to mine. I knew very well that if there was to be no tea, the oatmeal-tub would be looked into ; and though I might fall into the hands of kind persons, who had so readily forgiven the boy who had robbed them, I did not know how far they might extend their charity towards mice, as I had observed all along that we were looked upon as things to be destroyed. Besides, the boy had shown himself sorry for what he had done, and had endeavoured to replace what he had taken ;—neither of these things could I do.

I had not time for more thought, however, for at that moment the tub was lifted from the shelf, and Susan, looking into it, exclaimed,—

“O grandfather, there’s a mouse!” and instantly she let the tub fall on the floor.

As it rolled on to its side, I darted out, and in another instant I was in the garden, making my way to the gate as fast as I could scamper. I never once looked behind me, and when I thought I must have run a long way, for I was completely tired, I again took shelter in a stack, my favourite resting-place. Here I remained all night, heartily glad of my escape from prison, and fully determined this time I *would be* more careful.

The stack in which I had sheltered myself, I found in the morning, belonged to Farmer Humphreys, and was not far from his house; for at the pump I dis-

covered Dame Humphreys, who was talking to an old lame woman.

“I don’t know what’s come o’er our Jack lately, he be so altered,” said Mrs. Humphreys; “he minds now what his faither says to un, and works a deal harder, and goes to Sunday-school regular, and he don’t quarrel wi’ Jane as he used to do.”

“That lad ’ll be a comfort to ye yet, dame,” said the old woman, “one of these days, “and I b’lieve it’s all along of Mr. Percival; I know he’s talked wi’ him a deal of late. Jack came to my cottage on Sunday evening, and he says, ‘Sally, shall I read a bit to ye?’—‘Bless the boy,’ says I, ‘what’s put that into yer head?’—‘Oh!’ says he, ‘I ben to the school, and Mr. Percival told us that we could all do some good if we liked. He said we could be kind to one another, and help one another, and assist our parents,

and when we had time, read to our poor neighbours, or dig a little in their garden for them. Some of you boys I know can read very well ; now go and see what good you can do.' And so, Sally, I'm come to read to you if you will let me.'—' Ay, for certain sure, my man,' says I, 'and thank ye too ;' and a nice chapter he read, and very well too, and I was much obliged to him, and I hope he'll come again. But I maun't stand talking here, for Mr. Percival, I know, will be calling at the cottage to see me ; for I can't get to church, I'm so lame, and my clogs are so bad. Thank ye, Mistress Humphreys, for the sup of milk ye gie me."

"Don't trouble to come for't again, Sally, while ye are so lame. I'll send Jack or Jane with it to you."

"Thank you, thank you, dame, yer very kind, and it'll be quite pleasant to see the children at my cottage."

Dear reader, from my hole in the stack I heard all this, and it set me thinking. Yes; and I seemed to feel a ray of light come over me, so that I could see how that one good, kind man and his loving family had, with his wise and gentle teaching and good example to the village, spread deeds of charity and kindness all around, and had bound hearts together with a cord of affection.

I scarcely understand what I am writing, dear reader; it is only the effect of the bright ray that fell upon me just then; but you are a reasonable creature, and you can comprehend me, so I leave the matter in your hands, while I run off in search of what I very much want—some breakfast.

“Can I do better,” I said to myself, “than follow old Sally? she has got a jug of milk, and I dare say she has got some meal or some bread at home to put

into it. I hope, however, the meal is not in a tub; for if it is, I shall satisfy myself with the scatterings this time, and I expect that will be scanty fare, even for a tiny mouse."

Well, here we are at last. I kept at a respectful distance behind the old woman all the way, and she has been a weary time in hobbling home. "Oh, it is a sad thing to be lame," I thought; and now we have arrived at the cottage, what a poor old tumble-down place it is, worse than old John's; and Sally has no nice little granddaughter to cheer her loneliness. "I don't wonder at her telling Dame Humphreys she should be glad to see the children," I thought to myself, "though she would not be very glad to see me; so I shall keep out of her way; I don't want to intrude on her."

I was rather divided between comfort

and curiosity. I knew that unless I crept into the cupboard, there would be small chance of my getting any food, whereas, if I *did* get in, there was quite as small a chance of my seeing Mr. Percival, or any one else who might pay Sally a visit. As I *knew*, however, that some one was sure to come, I, for once in my life, gave up my greedy propensity to my curiosity, and got into a small hole near the fireplace, where I could see without being seen.

I was rewarded for my self-denial, for not only was my curiosity gratified, but my hunger also was appeased; for the old woman, in making her porridge, scattered sufficient meal for satisfying my hunger, though I must confess the repast was a slight one. I got my breakfast while Sally was eating hers. She did not perceive me under the grate, and as soon as I had finished, I crept back



again, and stood on the watch for visitors more than an hour.

All this time did it take the poor old woman to sweep up her house, she was so feeble. Poor old thing, she little thought when she was handling the broom with such numb hands, and stooping with such pain to pick anything up, that little hands and heads were then at work for her ; yet so it was, as you shall hear, and she will find out.

First of all there was Susan trudging away to buy the clogs. Of course I found out all these things I am about to tell of by what I heard ; but perhaps, dear reader, I had better tell you as it all came to my knowledge.

Well, by the time the house was set to rights, in walked Susan. I could see her rosy face shine again with walking so fast, and her bright eyes sparkled with pleasure as she said—

“ Well, Sally, how do ? ”

“ Well to be sure, Susan, who’d a thought of seeing you? But I’m glad howsumever; you always look so cheerful and happy like.”

“ And *I am* very happy to-day, Sally, because I am come to give you pleasure, I hope. Don’t you like to go to church, Sally ? ”

“ Ay, ’deed I do,” said the old woman; “ but I ain’t been able to go this month or more, what with the rhumatis, and the old clogs, ’tis tha that gi’ed me the cold and brought on the pain.”

“ Look here, Sally,” said Susan, drawing forth a pair of new clogs from her basket; “ see what grandfather has sent you; now you *will* be able to go to church, won’t you ? ”

“ Oh, lawk-a-daisy! lawk-a-daisy! ” said the poor old thing, throwing up her withered hands. “ But it’s kind of your

grandfather to think of me in my need ; many thanks to him, and to you too, dear Susan, for your goodness to a poor old woman : I know a blessing will be on you for it. Don't be angry with me if I ask how you could afford to get them, so poor as your grandfather is? "

" Ah ! that's a secret, Sally," said Susan, laughing. " I mus'n't tell you now ; all I can say is that they are honestly bought and paid for."

" Ay, ay, that I'll be bound for," said Sally, " for there's not a honester man in the world, to say nothing of the village, than John Melburn."

" Nor a kinder," said Susan, the tears starting to her eyes.

" Sure ! sure ! " said Sally ; " and you take after him, Susan dear."

" But it's *not* very kind of me staying talking here," said Susan, " when grand-

father wants his dinner; so good bye, Sally; I shall come and see you again this afternoon, for I want you to show me a better way to knit the heel of a stocking; I don't think I do mine properly;" and away tripped Susan, with a light heart and step.

"Bless that dear child," said old Sally, looking at her new clogs; "she is a good 'un too. It was so kind like on 'um to buy me the things; but I wonder too how John got the money. I *should* like to know if Mr. Percival giv' it him. Nay, nay, he would no' do that neither, for he would have bought them for me hisself, if the money had been his; but I need not worry myself about where they came from, I'm right thankful for them, and that's all about it;" and the poor old body tried them on, and stumped about in them, and seemed as proud as could be. Then she took them off, and sat down

to her knitting ; and as all was quiet, I had a nice nap, and it is not unlikely that Sally had a nap too.

I don't know how long I slept, but I was awakened by a great noise—the door of the cottage was thrown quickly open, and in rushed Jane and Jack Humphreys with a basket.

“Sally, Sally,” said they, both speaking at once, “we’re come to have some tea with you.”

“Nay, nay, bairns,” said the old woman; “I’se ge yer some porridge,—I ha’ na tea; it’s seldom I gets a bit tea and sugar, ony when Miss Percival brings me a lock nows and thens.”

“Ah ! but we’ve brought some tea and sugar with us, Sally, and some cream, and some butter, and some hot cakes. Won’t we have a feast, that’s all ? Mother says Jack’s been such a good boy lately that she’d give us a treat.”

“Well, ye needn’t ha’ told that,” said Jack, half-ashamed.

“Oh! but I’m rale glad to hear it though,” said Sally; “it’s better nor tea and cakes to me, though *they* be good too. I only wish Susan was here to have tea with us.”

“Oh! so do I,” said Jane. “Can’t we go and bring her? ’twill be such fun for us all to have tea together.”

“Ah! but you must get old John to come too; for Susan won’t leave her grandfather to sup his porridge alone.”

“We’ll bring them both, we’ll bring them both,” said the children, joyfully; “but I ’spose we must bring some cups, or mugs, or basins with us; for you haven’t got enough for such a party, Sally?”

“’Deed I haven’t,” said Sally; “ye mun bring cups wi’ ye.”

I was quite delighted with the thoughts of such a party; but I must own the pros-

pect of a feast for myself afterwards was the most pleasant part of it.

At length the merry chatter I heard outside told me they were coming; and very soon all were seated around the humble, but for once well-covered, tea-table.

There were the nice hot cakes, and tea, and sugar, and cream, and happy faces, and friendly greetings. It was, indeed, a very pleasant sight; and they were all so merry, and old John and old Sally told so many funny stories of their young days, that the children laughed till the tears ran down their rosy cheeks, and once Jack, in cutting a caper at hearing John tell of a curious scrape he got into when he was a boy, nearly upset the table with all its contents.

This sobered them a little; but you may be sure not for long, their spirits were too good for that. As for old Sally, she, I

think, almost forgot her *rhuma'tis*, and seemed disposed to dance in her new clogs, which she took care to show to Jack and his sister, and to tell them who gave them to her, though this made Susan and Jack colour up, because *they* knew what money bought the clogs; however, this did not lessen the happiness of the little party, and in all their chatter you may be sure their good friends the Percivals were not forgotten, nor did Mrs. Humphreys go without her share of thanks for the part she had played in effecting the present happy meeting.

At nine o'clock they all departed, and left the old woman and myself alone again. Then I saw her go to a shelf and take down a large book; and putting on her spectacles, she sat down to read.

She looked so contented and so comfortable, that I could not help thinking to myself, "Well, if people are ever so poor,



there is a way to be happy. A mud floor and bare walls, and porridge or dry bread, do not indeed seem very inviting; but from what I have noticed, where men, or women, or children, instead of thinking of themselves, are trying to make others happy, whether they are rich or poor, they are almost sure to be happy themselves."

I am only a mouse, you know, little reader, so you mus'n't expect that I thought long about such things; and for my own part I had nobody to care for but myself. I was getting very impatient now for something to eat, and I wished old Sally would put away her book and go to bed. This she was not very long in doing, and then I came out and enjoyed myself very much with the scattered fragments from the tea-table. In my heart I thanked Dame Humphreys and Susan, and all of them, for my share of

the feast; but this, you know, was all selfishness in me.

When my supper was over, I frisked and gambolled about very merrily, for I did not feel in the least afraid, though I heard old Sally say, "Plague take the mice! I wonder what they come here for; I'se sure there's little enough for 'um to eat."

By-and-by I grew tired of playing about, so I thought I would just take a peep into the old woman's cupboard. I wanted to find something new, for I was not hungry now at all; so after two or three climbings, and as many falls, and a few more exclamations from Sally, I got into the cupboard at last.

Though I wasn't at all hungry, I put my nose into every cup and basin I could find; but there were not many. At last, as I was leaning forward over the edge of a little jar that had some dark-looking

stuff in it, *in* I plumped, and was well-nigh smothered, for I went in head foremost. I'm sure I shall never like the taste of treacle again,—I found out afterwards that was the name of the sticky stuff I got into,—my eyes, and nose, and ears were stopped with it. I was quite sick with the taste, though it was sweet. I put up my paws to try to clean my face, but it was of no use, for I was treacle all over.

I wearied my poor little legs in attempting to get out;—that was of no use, and this I thought must be the end of me;—my history would be finished sooner than I had expected. It would have been easier for me to have clambered up a wall six feet high, than to climb the sides of that little paltry jar. However, one more desperate effort I determined to make, and over went the jar, with the treacle and myself.

Oh, the mess I was in ! and the mess I made of the poor old woman's cupboard, with crawling about to get myself clean !

As soon as I felt a little relieved from the stickiness, I dropped down on the floor, for I dreaded old Sally's coming to the cupboard in the morning, and finding me there. I determined to make my escape as soon as ever the door should be opened in the morning.

My frisking, depend upon it, was all over for that night ; indeed, I felt as if I should never be free in my limbs again. I wondered whether this was anything like Sally's rheumatism that made her so lame.

No sooner was the door opened in the morning, than out I bolted ; and though I never had much pleasure in the dewy grass before, I crept through and through it now, and rolled myself in it till I had

partly got rid of my dirty coat and inconvenient leggings.

And now, where was I to bend my course? Every house I had entered, I had done some mischief in, and consequently left in disgrace; I did not therefore like to go back to any of them again, so I ran along, without knowing where I was going or what I should do. At last I came to a large white gate, and looking underneath it, I saw a very great and, to me, a very strange-looking building. It was not a house, nor a cottage, nor a barn, *that* I knew very well; and I was much puzzled to think what it could be.

At last I crept underneath the gate, that I might go nearer to examine it. There was a wide gravel walk leading up to the building, and on either side there were little mounds of earth, some larger than others, covered with grass; and

large white stones stood up at the head of them, with black letters on them.

I could not tell what to make of all this ; but running among the grass, I found that round many of these mounds there were iron palings, and flowers were all trained over them. On some there were flowers and no rails. One little mound I marked especially ; it was almost covered with roses and honeysuckle ; and afterwards I found out that it was a grave where one of Mr. Percival's children had been buried ; and Edward and Emily used to take care of, and train the flowers that grew round and over the pretty little mound of earth.

This was a strange place for a mouse to be in, and I did not half like it. Old nooks and corners, or pantries and cupboards, notwithstanding all I had suffered in the latter, suited me much better ; but we can't always have what we like best,

so I rambled on, first over one mound then another,—there seemed to be no end to them.

At last I came to the building. It had a very large door in the front, and there was a porch before it, with seats on each side, and all round this porch grew the wild roses and honeysuckle, and nearly up to the roof of the building the walls were covered with ivy. Oh, it was a sweet spot! I found out afterwards that it was good Mr. Percival's church, where he met and talked to all the people in the village one day in every week.

All round the place there were beds of flowers; it was like a garden, it was so beautiful. In this church I have often heard Mr. Percival read out of a great book much larger than Sally's, since the time I am now writing about.

But I am going on too fast, for I had not then seen the inside of the church;

I was only in the porch. I soon, however, contrived to creep underneath the door ; and oh ! what a strange place I had got into. To me it looked very long, although it was only a small church.

There was a path down the middle, and at the end of the path were steps and rails ; and here it was that often since that time I have heard Mr. Percival catechizing the children of the village, and giving them good advice, just as a kind father would.

There was one thing I had never seen before,—a beautiful large window with coloured glass in it ; there was a long table, too, within the rails, covered with red cloth. On each side of the path there were seats where the people sat, and there were two large boxes, one on each side, where Mr. Percival used to get in when he read and talked to the people ;



I heard them afterwards called the pulpit and the reading-desk.

But was there anything to eat here? —this was the main question with me. I was still quite sick with the treacle, and I wanted something to put the taste out of my mouth ; so I went searching about for a long time, till at last on one of the seats I found plenty of crumbs of bread and cheese and cake. I found out on the next Sunday that this was the place where the scholars sat, and I expected there would be always a good supply there from one week's end to the other ; so I thought to myself, " Why, this is a lonely place to be sure ; but I shall have no one to interfere with me, and I shall have this large place to myself all days but Sunday. I think I might as well make up my mind at once to live here."

"What ! live in a church," I think I hear my little readers say ; "that must be very

dull." Not at all, dear children. I assure you I have found it a very safe and pleasant abode : a fine large room to scamper about in all the week, with no fear of anybody trying to catch me, and once a week the sight of all my good friends ; for I cannot help calling them friends, though *they* do not know that there is such a poor tiny thing as myself thinking about them.

When Sunday morning came—it was a bright clear day—I awoke with the noise of the great door being unlocked ; then I saw a cleanly-dressed country-looking man come in and begin to wipe the dust off the seats, and to put the cushions right. He went up into the pulpit and put all to rights there ; then he came down and began to pull a rope, which made a large bell ring. All this time I lay quite still, for I did not wish the old white-headed man to see me. Very soon I heard the

clatter of a number of little feet, and I knew well that the children were coming to church from the Sunday-school; and though I felt rather afraid, I couldn't help looking out for them, for I was sure I should see dear Miss Percival and her good brother Edward, and Miss Lacy, and her sister Lucy, though I little thought of the trouble I should give these kind friends by my foolish conduct. However, I must tell you all about it, even if I am blamed: it is better to be straightforward and to speak the truth. Well, I lay quiet till all the children were seated in church, which was the case before the bells had done; then I just peeped out a little to see who was there. No harm would have followed if there had been no peepers but myself, but unluckily there were a great many pairs of black and blue eyes as fond of peeping about as my own; yes, even, I

am sorry to say it, in church; and thus it came to pass that I was soon found out, and there was a general shuffling of feet, and stooping down of heads, and whispering. All this made a great disturbance, and I heard Miss Percival say, "What is the matter, children? what is all this noise about?" "There's a mouse under the seat, miss," said a curly-headed little fellow; "I seed it just this minute." "Well, never mind the mouse," said Miss Percival; "it won't hurt you. Sit still, it will soon run away, depend upon it. I cannot have this noise, children," said she in a low tone. "Remember where you are, and don't think any more about the mouse." Oh, that dear, kind young lady! how much obliged I was to her, and I took care to creep away into a corner out of sight. It would have been wise if I had remained there all church-

time, but it was not in my nature to be quiet. I was soon at my pranks again, but not until I had seen Mr. Percival come in, which he did very soon, for he had been to the Sunday-school. I saw many little bright eyes twinkle with pleasure when he looked at all the children so kindly, just as if he had been the father of that large family; I think his heart must have been full of love for his little flock. By-and-by in walked Mrs. Percival and the younger children, all dressed very neat and plain. There were no flowers and fine ribbons, and flounces and trimmings; nothing to attract the attention of people poorer than themselves. After them came Mr. and Mrs. Lacy, and then Farmer Humphreys and his wife, which, I confess, I was very glad of, for I did not expect *they* would come, though Jack and his sister were among the scholars. I saw

old Sally come stumping in with her new clogs, and John—honest John Melburn—with his thick stick; Susan of course was in her place. Soon the bell ceased ringing, and for a moment all was quiet; then Mr. Percival rose up and opened his large book, and read very solemnly and slowly from it. You, dear readers, who go to church, well know what he said, I dare say. I of course don't understand it myself, nor, indeed, I am sorry to say, did I try to listen, but began my silly gambols again; and though I dare say you will scarcely believe me, I ran up a little boy's leg, whose trousers were rather short and wide, by which trick I caused great trouble and noise among the small people; for the lad, in jumping off his seat, which he did pretty quickly, knocked down the little girl who sat next him, and then shaking his trousers very hard, I fell upon my back close by the

poor silly child, who set up such a scream as made everybody start, I have no doubt. I started pretty quickly, I can tell you, for I felt the danger I was in, and knew I should have to run for my life. I wish, I am sure, that children would not be so very foolish as to be frightened of a mouse—a little tiny mouse. Why, they are ten times bigger and stronger than I am, or, indeed, any of our tribe. We never think of killing them or of hurting them, though they are so ready to destroy us. When we are seen, our only care is to run away as fast as we can from them; but I must go on with my story, or it will never come to an end.

The poor little girl was lifted up, and the stupid boy, whose legs I am sure I only tickled, sat quietly down in his seat again, while I scampered away, glad enough to make my escape so easily; but I did a little more mischief in my journey

out, for the old man who rang the bell caught sight of me before I reached the door, and, seizing hold of a stick, he was after me in a second. Ah! but my little short legs were much quicker in their motions than his clumsy feet, and besides that, he did not lift them high enough; and as he was striding after me in the churchyard, he caught his foot in a stone that stood a little way out of the ground, and came sprawling all his length. I was not a bit sorry for the old fellow, for it would have been much better if he had stayed in church to hear good Mr. Percival's sermon, than racing after a wee thing like me.

But, dear children, I fell myself into a trap in my hurry and fright; I was so anxious to escape the big stick, that I did not see straight before me a large deep hole that had been dug in the churchyard, so in I tumbled, going right to the



bottom, which felt cold and damp. I didn't like it at all, and I had the greatest trouble to get out, for the earth crumbled away as I tried to creep up the sides; which I was so long in doing, that by the time I got to the top all the people were coming out of church. I hid myself behind one of the tombstones, and saw them all pass; and many kind words I heard spoken between the neighbours. They all seemed like brothers and sisters.

One thing I very much wondered at, I did not see Mr. and Mrs. Morley and their children; and, oh! dear readers, now I have a mournful story to tell you.

As soon as the people had all come out of church, I heard the bell begin to toll slowly and solemnly, and I saw coming in at the great gate many persons dressed in black; and some were carrying a little coffin.

Oh, how sorry I felt when I saw poor Mr. and Mrs. Morley and their eldest son and daughter, all looking so sad, that my heart ached for them; and when the coffin was put into the deep hole that I had just escaped from, all who stood round cried bitterly. It was a sad, sad sight to behold; but then I heard Mr. Percival read something from a book, and after that he went and spoke some kind, loving words to the poor weeping parents, to comfort them in their trouble. I think he said that some day they should see their dear child again, very bright and beautiful, and that then they should never part again, but live happily for ever.

This made me feel glad; for as I told you, I was much concerned about Mr. and Mrs. Morley, they were such very kind people, and were so fond of their children, though they did not

know the right way of bringing them up.

I have since heard that they had been more careful and not *quite* so indulgent to their children; and once, after the funeral, I heard Mr. Percival say to his wife,—

“My dear, the loss of their child has been a blessing to Mr. and Mrs. Morley, for they are both wiser and better in their plans for bringing up their other dear little ones.”

Poor Mr. and Mrs. Morley, they were much liked by all their neighbours, especially the poor, for they were very kind to them.

When the next Sunday came round, there might be seen all over the little grave pretty flowers growing, planted in pots. It was a sweet sight. *I* know well enough how the flowers came there, for I saw Miss Percival and her brother

and the two Lacys come with baskets full of them, and they were all so busy decking out the little mound of new earth ; and many, many soft, bright tears I saw roll down their young cheeks, and drop upon the pretty buds and leaves, as these loving friends bent over the grave of the dear little one who slept beneath in its last quiet bed.

Oh, dear readers, whoever you are, pray learn to be kind to each other. It is much better to be good than to be clever and proud ; for though very sharp children sometimes make people *wonder* at them, they seldom gain love ; and sometimes such sharp little folks are much disliked because of their pertness. The same may be said of pretty children, if they are not good as well ; people are soon tired of them.

Mr. and Mrs. Percival had early taught *their* children to be kind and

loving to one another, to lend their playthings, to divide their sweetmeats, to speak gently, and to give mutual assistance in all their little sports. Thus they grew up a loving and united family, a comfort to one another, a blessing to all around them. And thus I wish it may be with my little readers. May they have kind and wise parents to teach them, and a good man like Mr. Percival to tell them the way to heaven. For myself, I *have* made up my mind to remain where I am. I know I must be contented with poor fare, but I shall not be worse off than many a good, worthy, hard-working clergyman who wears his life out in trying to serve his people, and is always "as poor as a CHURCH MOUSE."

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